

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: INITIAL OUTLOOK ON WILSON'S REPLACEMENT

REF: LONDON 4053

1. PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (PLP) WILL MEET EVENING
MARCH 16 TO DETERMINE RULES WHICH WILL APPLY IN ELECTING
WILSON'S REPLACEMENT AS LEADER OF LABOR PARTY, AND PRO-
CEDURE ADOPTED COULD WELL AFFECT OUTCOME. LABOR
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PARTY LIAISON COMMITTEE HAS BEEN MEETING TO PREPARE PRO-

POSAL FOR CONSIDERATION BY FULL PLP, AND ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT IT WILL RECOMMEND COMPRESSED TIMEFRAME, THOUGH EXACT DETAILS WILL HAVE TO AWAIT MEETING ITSELF (TRADITIONAL PLP ELECTION PROCEDURE IS TO DROP WEAKEST CANDIDATE AFTER EACH ROUND OF BALLOTING, WITH A WEEK BETWEEN BALLOTS' AND WINNER REQUIRING ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF BALLOTS CAST). WE ANTICIPATE LIAISON COMMITTEE WILL RECOMMEND COMPRESSING ENTIRE PROCESS TO MAXIMUM OF THREE WEEKS, BUT THEIR PROPOSALS ARE SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT.

2. AS REPORTED REFTEL, CALLAGHAN CONTINUES TO BE REGARDED AS FRONTRUNNER BY PLP MEMBERS, MEDIA, OTHER OBSERVERS, AND BOOKMAKERS. HIS AGE (64 THIS MONTH) WOULD APPEAR TO BE MAJOR OBSTACLE. HEALEY IS PROBABLY SECOND RUNNER AT THIS POINT, THOUGH ONE OF HIS STRONGEST SUPPORTERS REPORTS THAT HIS BRUTAL PERFORMANCE OF LAST WEEK HAS SERIOUSLY ERODED HIS BASE OF SUPPORT WITHIN PLP, A VIEW WITH WHICH MOST OF OUR SOURCES CONCUR. ONE RIGHT-WING PLP MEMBER, HOWEVER, TOLD EMBOFF THAT HEALEY HAD ENHANCED HIS STANDING WITH RIGHT OF PARTY. THIS SOURCE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT MICHAEL FOOT MIGHT SUPPORT HEALEY. IN OUR VIEW, HEALEY'S ELECTION WOULD PROBABLY EXACERBATE LEFT-WING BITTERNESS. THOUGH SUPPORT OF FOOT, SHOULD IT MATERIALIZE, WOULD NO DOUBT LIMIT DAMAGE IN THAT REGARD. JENKINS IS RUNNING CLOSE TO HEALEY, OR PERHAPS EVEN SLIGHTLY AHEAD, AND HIS SUPPORTERS ARE ALREADY AT WORK. HE IS, HOWEVER, ANATHEMA TO MUCH OF CENTER AND LEFT OF PARTY AND, IF ELECTED, WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY INTENSIFY LEFT-RIGHT DIVISION IN PARTY. MOST INTERESTING DARK HORSE POSSIBILITY IS FOOT, WHO IS STRONG FAVORITE OF LEFT-WING. TRIBUNE GROUP MEMBER CLOSE TO FOOT TOLD EMBOFF THEY WILL MAKE STRONG BID TO DRAFT HIM, BUT MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE HE IS UNLIKELY TO STAND. IF A CANDIDATE. FOOT COULD DRAW VOTES FROM CENTER AS WELL AS LEFT BASED ON HIS PERFORMANCE AS EMPLOYMENT SECRETARY. TONY BENN IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO MAKE BID, BUT WILL ENJOY TRIBUNE SUPPORT ONLY IF FOOT DOES NOT STAND. TWO TRIBUNITES (AND OTHERS) TOLD EMBOFF THEY REGARD BENN A CERTAIN LOSER. TONY CROSLAND IS ALSO EXPECTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO STAND, BUT AT THIS POINT, MUST BE REGARDED A LONG SHOT. HIS PROSPECTS WOULD IMPROVE IF ELECTION GOES MORE THAN TWO OR THREE BALLOTS. SHIRLEY WILLIAMS MAY ALSO LAUNCH CANDIDACY, BUT WILL FACE LONG ODDS INDEED. HER PROSPECTS WOULD ALSO IMPROVE IF FIRST FEW BALLOTS ARE INDECISIVE. THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON OUR INITIAL CANVASS OF BROAD SPECTRUM OF PLP MEMBERS AND IS SUBJECT TO REVISION.

3. FOLLOWING ODDS OFFERED BY LADBROKES, A MAJOR BOOK-
MAKER, ARE PROVIDED FYI ONLY: CALLAGHAN, 5 TO 4;
HEALEY, 7 TO 4; JENKINS AND CROSLAND, BOTH 8 TO 1; FOOT,
12 TO 1; BENN, 16 TO 1; AND WILLIAMS, 20 TO 1.

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